

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 02372 110952Z

15

ACTION NEA-12

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R 110902Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3711

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: BHUTTO ON CABINET CHANGES, BALUCHISTAN AND TRAVELS

REF: KARACHI 534

SUMMARY: BHUTTO TOLD PRESS HE PLANNED TO NAME "NEW CABINET" IN MID-APRIL AFTER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS FROM LATE MARCH, AND THAT HE ALSO HOPED GIVE LONG-EXPECTED STATEMENT ON BALUCHISTAN AROUND END OF MARCH. LOCAL SPECUALTION IS THAT CABINET CHANGES MAY INVOLVE NUMBER OF NEW FACES AS WELL AS PORTFOLIO RESHUFFLING. PRIMIN AVOIDED DIRECT REPLY TO QUESTION ABOUT HIS PLANS TO VISIT CHINA, SAID TWO FOREIGN LEADERS (WHOM HE EID NOT IDENTIFY) EXPECTED VISIT PAKISTAN SHORTLY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO MET BRIEFLY WITH PRESS MARCH 9 AT AIRPORT CEREMONIES FOR VISITING UAE PRESIDENT. HE TOLD PRESS HE HOPED TO RECONSTITUTE HIS CABINET ABOUT MIDDLE OF APRIL, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING TWO OR THREE WEEK SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, NOW SCHEDULED TO BEGIN
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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 02372 110952Z

ON MARCH 25, BHUTTO REPORTEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT CABINET

CHANGES WOULD AMOUNT TO FORMATION OF "NEW" CABINET.
RATHER THAN "RESHUFFLE" OF EXISTING CABINET.

2. BHUTTO WAS ALSO ASKED ABOUT HIS MUCH-DEFERRED STATEMENT ON BALUCHISTAN. HE SAID HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TO GIVE HIS STATEMENT AROUND END OF MARCH AFTER CONFERENCE WITH VARIOUS LEADERS FROM BALUCHISTAN. (SEE KARACHI REFTEL FOR ANALYSIS OF LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON BALUCHISTAN.)

3. BHUTTO AVOIDED DIRECT REPLY TO A QUERY ABOUT HIS EXPECTED VISIT TO CHINA, WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED PREVIOUSLY WITH THE PRESS. HE DID INDICATE THAT TWO FOREIGN LEADERS ARE EXPECTED TO VISIT PAKISTAN SHORTLY. (EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS ONE OF THESE IS SHAH'S BROTHER MAHMUD, WHOSE VISIT WAS ORIGINALLY PLANNED FOR EARLY MARCH. OTHER VISITOR MAY BE ITALIAN FORMER MORO WHOSE SCHEDULED VISIT IN ABEYANCE BECAUSE OF FALL OF ROMANOV GOVERNMENT.)

4. COMMENT: CABINET NOW, LIKE BHUTTO'S ORIGINAL CABINET, IS COMPOSED OF 11 MINISTERS FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS OF JATOI, RAISANI, SHERPAO AND MAHMUD ALI (ISLAMABAD 1617). TRIDEV ROY, SOLE REMAINING MINISTER OF EAST PAKISTAN ORIGIN, CAN BE EXPECTED TO LEAVE PRESENT CABINET EITHER IN MID-APRIL CHANGES OR SUBSEQUENTLY. ASIDE FROM SHIFTING SOME CENTRAL PORTFOLIOS, BHUTTO WILL PROBABLY BRING IN SOME NEW FACES, WITH CHANGES ALSO TAKING PLACE IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AT SAME TIME. BALUCHISTAN IS CURRENTLY NOT REPRESENTED IN CABINET AND AT LEAST ONE PORTFOLIO IS EXPECTED TO GO TO THAT PROVINCE, WITH DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF SENATE TAHIR RUMORED AS POSSIBLE CHOICE. OTHER NAMES RUMORED IN ISLAMABAD ARE FORMER DEPUTY SPEAKER OF ASSEMBLY MOHAMMAD HANIF FROM QAIYUM LEAGUE AS MINISTER, PRESENT MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO HASAN MEER TO BE GIVEN SPECIFIC PORTFOLIO OR CHIEF MINISTERSHIP OF PUNJAB, AND MUSTAFA KHAR (JUST RESIGNED AS PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER) BROUGHT INTO CABINET. CONCEIVABLE THAT LEADERS OF KHATTACK-GANDAPUR GROUP IN FRONTIER MIGHT ALSO BE BROUGHT TO CENTER IF BHUTTO DECIDES TO WORK DEAL TO GIVE SHERPAO CHIEF MINISTERSHIP OF FRONTIER.

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 02372 110952Z

5. LOYALTY TO BHUTTO LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO BE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION IN SELECTION OF CABINET CHOICES FROM PUNJAB AND SIND, AND INTERNAL PROVINCIAL POLITICAL FACTORS MAJOR DETERMINANT REGARDING CHOICES FROM FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN. RECONSTITUTION OF CABINET WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT PPP STATED POLICY OF SEGREGATING PARTY POSITIONS AND MINISTERSHIPS

(CURRENTLY MINISTERS RAHIM AND MEER ARE PPP PARTY OFFICIALS).
RECONSTITUTION COULD ALSO SET STAGE FOR MUCH-POSTPONED
PARTY REORGANIZATION PROMISED FOR THIS SPRING.
BYROADE

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